<u>WHAT IS CLAIMED IS</u>:

1.   A method for accessing a service provided by one or more service providers, comprising:

(a)   receiving, from a client, a first request for a set of one or more service locations;

(b)   in response to the first request, providing the set of one or more service locations to the client;

(c)   receiving feedback data regarding a transaction of the client with a selected service provider corresponding to one of the set of service locations; and

(d)   receiving, from the client, a second request for a second set of one or more service locations;

(e)   in response to the second request, providing the second set of one or more service locations to the client, the second set at least partly based on the received feedback data.

2.   The method of claim 1, wherein receiving the feedback data comprises receiving the feedback data in the second request from the client.

3.   The method of claim 1, wherein receiving the feedback data comprises receiving the feedback data from the selected service provider.

4.   The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving additional feedback data from at least one other client, and wherein the second set is at least partly based on the additional feedback data.

5.   The method of claim 1, wherein the selected service provider comprises a proxy that communicates with another service provider to provide the service and wherein receiving the feedback data comprises receiving data regarding the other service provider from the proxy.

6.   The method of claim 1, further comprising aggregating the feedback data and removing information that identifies the client.

7.   The method of claim 1, further comprising providing data to one or more of the service providers regarding client selections of the service providers, and wherein the second set is at least partly based on the data regarding client selections.

8.   The method of claim 7, wherein at least one of the service providers automatically changes a characteristic of a service provided by the service provider based on the data.

9.   The method of claim 1, further comprising providing feedback data to one or more of the service providers.

10.   The method of claim 9, further comprising receiving, from at least one of the one or more of the service providers, updated characteristic data based on the feedback data.

11.   The method of claim 1, further comprising providing at least part of the set of service locations to one or more of the service providers.

12.   The method of claim 1, wherein the feedback data is provided by a data collector executing on the client and a data collector executing on the selected service provider.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein at least a portion of the feedback data provided by the data collector executing on the client is different from a corresponding portion of the feedback data provided by the data collector executing on the selected service provider.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein the second request comprises client preferences including one or more undesirable service providers.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein the feedback data comprises connection characteristics.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein the feedback data comprises characteristics of response time or time to complete the transaction.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein the feedback data comprises information that indicates a satisfaction of the client regarding the transaction of the client with the selected service provider.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the satisfaction of the client is determined by data regarding completion or adequacy of the transaction.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the data collected includes data indicative of a client cancellation of the transaction together with a timing of the client cancellation.

20.   An apparatus for accessing a service, comprising:

(a)   an interface arranged to receive feedback data regarding at least one transaction between a first client and at least one service provider;

(b)   a directory service coupled to the interface, wherein the directory service is arranged to perform actions including in response to a request from a second client, determining a set of one or more service locations based at least in part on the feedback data.

21.   The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the interface is further arranged to receive feedback data from at least one intermediate network device that receives information pertaining to at least one transaction between the first client and the at least one service provider.

22.   The apparatus of claim 20, further comprising an interface arranged to send at least some of the feedback data to the at least one service provider.

23.   The apparatus of claim 20, further comprising an interface arranged to send at least some of the feedback data to the at least one service provider and to receive, in response, modified service provider characteristics from the at least one service provider.

24.   A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions, comprising:

(a)   requesting a set of one or more service locations of at least one service provider from a directory service;

(b)   performing a transaction with the at least one service provider;

(c)   maintaining feedback data associated with the transaction; and

(d)   sharing at least some of the feedback data among a plurality of clients.

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25.   The computer-readable medium of claim 24, further comprising selecting one of the service locations at least partially based on additional feedback data received from at least one of the plurality of clients.

26.   The computer-readable medium of claim 24, further comprising requesting a second set of one or more service locations from a second directory service and providing the feedback data associated with the transaction to the second directory service for use in determining the second set of one or more service locations.

27.   An apparatus for accessing a service, comprising:

        (a)   an interface arranged to communicate with a plurality of clients and receive feedback data, the feedback data comprising information associated with at least one transaction with a service provider providing the service;

        (b)   means for determining a set of one or more service locations to return to a requesting client based at least in part on the feedback data.

28.   The apparatus of claim 27, wherein the means for determining comprises means for determining the set of one or more service locations based at least in part on feedback data received from the plurality of clients.

29.   The apparatus of claim 27, further comprising a means for determining a ranking of the one or more service locations based at least in part on the feedback data.

30.   The apparatus of claim 27, wherein the means for determining includes logic for weighting the feedback data based on the source of the feedback data.

31. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions, comprising:

(a) receiving a first request from a client for at least one service location that provides access to a service;

(b) determining a result set containing a reference to a service provider;

(c) transmitting the result set to the client;

(d) receiving feedback data pertaining to a transaction between the client and the service provider;

(e) receiving a second request for a service;

(f) determining a second result set based on the second request and the feedback data.

32. The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein the feedback data is received from the client.

33. The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein the feedback data is received from the service provider.

34. The computer-readable medium of claim 31, further comprising transmitting additional data with the result set, wherein the additional data includes at least one of directory service information, a token identifying a user, policy information relating to the client, history data associated with the client, and transactional data relating to the transaction.

35. The computer-readable medium of claim 31, further comprising:

(a) transmitting the feedback data to the client;

(b) receiving the feedback data from the client.

36. The computer-readable medium of claim 35, wherein the feedback data is received from the client with the second request.

37. The computer-readable medium of claim 35, further comprising, subsequent to receiving the second request, requesting the feedback data from the client, wherein the feedback data is received from the client in response to the request for feedback data.

38. The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein the second request is received from a second client.

39. The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein the feedback data is received from the client and comprises characteristics of the quality of the transaction.

40. The computer-readable medium of claim 31, further comprising receiving additional feedback data from a plurality of sources, wherein determining the second result set is based on the additional feedback data.

41. The computer-readable medium of claim 31, further comprising:

(a) receiving additional components of feedback data from a plurality of sources, each component having a corresponding source; and

(b) weighting each component of the additional feedback data based on its corresponding source,

wherein determining the second result set is based on the additional feedback data and the weightings.

42.   The computer-readable medium of claim 31, wherein the second result set is ordered and includes a position for each returned service provider, the second request is received from the client, the feedback data is received from the service provider, and the feedback data increases the service provider's position in the second result set.

43.   The computer-readable medium of claim 31, further comprising:

(a)   transmitting the feedback data to the service provider; and

(b)   in response to transmitting the feedback data to the service provider, receiving, from the service provider, modified characteristics of the service provider, wherein the second result set is based on the modified characteristics.

44.   A method for determining a service provider, comprising:

(a)   performing a transaction with a first service provider;

(b)   automatically collecting feedback data pertaining to the transaction;

(c)   transmitting, to a directory service, a request for a provider of a second service;

(d)   transmitting, to the directory service, at least a portion of the feedback data;

(e)   receiving, from the directory service, a response based on the request and the portion of the feedback data.

45.   The method of claim 44, wherein the feedback data comprises an evaluation of a service provided by the first service provider.

46. The method of claim 44, wherein the feedback data comprises data representing a negative rating of the first service provider.

47. The method of claim 44, wherein the feedback data comprises data representing a positive rating of the first service provider.

48. The method of claim 44, wherein the feedback data comprises a quality of content provided by the first service provider.

49. The method of claim 44, wherein the response comprises a plurality of service locations, further comprising selecting, from the plurality of service locations, a desired service location at least partly based on the feedback data.

50. The method of claim 44, further comprising:

(a) receiving, from a client, a second feedback data pertaining to a transaction by the client; and

(b) transmitting, to the directory service, the second feedback data, wherein the response is based on the second feedback data.

51. A method for providing access, via a service provider, to a service, comprising:

(a) transmitting, to a directory service, attributes of the service provider or a service provided by the service provider;

(b) receiving, from the directory service, results of a query for the service;

(c) automatically modifying at least one of the attributes of the service provider or the service provided by the service provider based on the received results;

(d) transmitting, to the directory service, the at least one of the attributes that is modified.

52. The method of claim 51, wherein modifying the at least one of the attributes comprises modifying a cost of the service.

53. The method of claim 51, wherein modifying the at least one of the attributes comprises improving a response time of the service.

54. The method of claim 51, wherein any modified attributes are to be used in determining subsequent results in response to subsequent queries by a limited set of clients.

55. The method of claim 51, further comprising transmitting, to the directory service, data representative of a set of clients to be associated with the modified attributes.

56. The method of claim 51, further comprising:

(a) performing a transaction with a client;

(b) receiving feedback data pertaining to a characteristic of the transaction; and

(c) automatically modifying at least one of the attributes of the service provider or the service provided by the service provider based on the feedback data, to produce the at least one of the attributes that is modified.

57. A method for providing access, via a service provider, to a service, comprising:

(a) receiving, from the service provider, attributes of the service provider or the service provided by the service provider;

(b) receiving, from a client, a query for the service;

(c) determining a first result set in response to the client query;

(d) transmitting the first result set to the service provider; and

(e) if at least one modified attribute of the service or the service provider is received from the service provider in response to transmitting the result set to the service provider:

(i) determining a second result set based on the at least one modified attribute; and

(ii) transmitting the second result set to the client

58. The method of claim 57, further comprising if the at least one modified attribute of the service or the service provider is not received from the service provider in response to transmitting the result set to the service provider, transmitting the first result set to the client.

59.   In a service provider, a method for providing access to a service comprising:

(a)   transmitting, to a directory service, attributes of the service or the service provider;

(b)   performing a transaction with a client;

(c)   receiving feedback data pertaining to the transaction;

(d)   automatically modifying at least one attribute of the service or the service provider based on the feedback data; and

(e)   transmitting, to the directory service, the at least one modified attribute.

60.   The method of claim 59, wherein the at least one modified attribute is to be used in determining results of subsequent queries by a second client.

61.   The method of claim 59, further comprising transmitting data for restricting the at least one modified attribute to a set of one or more clients.

62.   The method of claim 59, further comprising transmitting data for restricting the at least one modified attribute to the client.

63.   The method of claim 59, further comprising transmitting a key for obtaining the at least one modified attribute.

64. A method for providing access to a service, by a service provider, comprising:

(a) transmitting, to a directory service, attributes of the service or the service provider;

(b) receiving at least a portion of a set of results determined by the directory service in response to a client query;

(c) in response to receiving at least the portion of the set of results, transmitting, to the directory service, at least one modified attribute of the service.

65. The method of claim 64, wherein the portion of the set of results is indicative of a ranking of service providers and further comprising determining the at least one modified attribute in order to improve a position of the service provider in the ranking of service providers.

66. The method of claim 64, further comprising transmitting data for restricting the at least one modified attribute to a set of one or more clients.

67. A system for providing access to a service, comprising:

(a) a data collector that receives feedback data regarding transactions between a plurality of clients and a plurality of service providers;

(b) a data repository that stores the feedback data received by the data collector; and

(c) an interface that provides the feedback data for use in determining a service provider to provide a client with a desired service, wherein the feedback data comprises data for determining differences between a service provider's advertised attributes and its corresponding actual attributes.